

Printing of new money may hike value of the old

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions about coins and currency.

Q—I've been reading about the contemplated issuance of currency with color or other new features. I'm concerned about the value of my large-size silver certificates if and when older bills have to be redeemed. Could you enlighten me? V.J., South Holland

A—The chances of Uncle Sam ordering a currency recall are slim to none. Treasury officials deny that they even are considering such a plan, insisting that design changes would be made only to foil counterfeiters.

Remember, too, that Congress would have to approve legislation authorizing a recall, an unlikely event.

Hoopla created by the printing of new currency [expected before the end of the decade] could increase interest in old bills such as yours. The value of your hoard might spurt ahead, not evaporate.

Q—With all the mint mark varieties of Olympic gold coins, which ones would make the best investments? For example, might the 1984-S gold piece eventually be worth more than the 1984-W? P.W., Algonquin.

A—It's tough to predict because final mintage figures won't be known until early next year. However, speculation already has begun in the hobby press, with some experts saying that gold pieces bearing a "S," "P" or "D" mint mark are a better bet than those with a "W" [all four cost \$352 each]. Bureaucrats will limit production of the S-P-D varieties to 150,000 coins each, while the "W" total could be at least twice that number.

Other observers doubt that any of the Olympic coins will prove to be good investments because the number of pieces being made—although relatively small—is more than enough to meet anticipated demand for years to come. In fact, one pro suggests that barring a sharp rise in precious-metal values, the Olympic gold coins soon will sell at less than their issue price on the secondary hobby market.

Q—I read an article about an exceedingly rare 1913 Liberty nickel worth at least \$200,000. I have a Liberty nickel made 10 years before that and would like to sell it [my rent problems are staggering]. How much is it worth to a collector? M.S., Evanston.

A—Sorry, but a 1903 nickel is relatively common, with dealers selling "good condition" specimens for about 75 cents. Only five 1913 Liberty nickels are known while the 1903 mintage totaled more than 28 million coins.

Questions about coins or currency? Send your queries to Roger Boye, The Arts, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.